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THE CZAR'S SOLILOQUY¹

BY MARK TWAIN

After the Czar's morning bath it is his habit to meditate an hour before dressing himself.—London Times Correspondence.

(*Viewing himself in the pier-glass.*) Naked, what am I? A lank, skinny, spider-legged libel on the image of God! Look at the waxwork head—the face, with the expression of a melon—the projecting ears—the knotted elbows—the dished breast—the knife-edged shins—and then the feet, all beads and joints and bone-sprays, an imitation X-ray photograph! There is nothing imperial about this, nothing imposing, impressive, nothing to evoke awe and reverence. Is it this that a hundred and forty million Russians kiss the dust before and worship? Manifestly not! No one could worship this spectacle, which is Me. Then who is it, what is it, that they worship? Privately, none knows better than I: it is my clothes. Without my clothes I should be as destitute of authority as any other naked person. Nobody could tell me from a parson, a barber, a dude. Then who is the real Emperor of Russia? My clothes. There is no other.

As Teufelsdröckh suggested, what would man be—what would *any* man be—without his clothes? As soon as one stops and thinks over that proposition, one realizes that without his clothes a man could be nothing at all; that the clothes do not merely make the man, the clothes *are* the man; that without them he is a cipher, a vacancy, a nobody, a nothing.

Titles—another artificiality—are a part of his clothing. They and the dry-goods conceal the wearer's inferiority and make him seem great and a wonder, when at bottom there is nothing remarkable about him. They can move a nation to

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fall on its knees and sincerely worship an Emperor who, without the clothes and the title, would drop to the rank of the cobbler and be swallowed up and lost sight of in the massed multitude of the inconsequential; an Emperor who, naked in a naked world, would get no notice, excite no remark, and be heedlessly shouldered and jostled like any other uncertified stranger, and perhaps offered a kopek to carry somebody's gripsack; yet an Emperor who, by the sheer might of those artificialities—clothes and a title—can get himself worshiped as a deity by his people, and at his pleasure and unrebuked can exile them, hunt them, harry them, destroy them, just as he would with so many rats if the accident of birth had furnished him a calling better suited to his capacities than empering. It is a stupendous force—that which resides in the all-concealing cloak of clothes and title; they fill the onlooker with awe; they make him tremble; yet he knows that every hereditary regal dignity commemorates a usurpation, a power illegitimately acquired, an authority conveyed and conferred by persons who did not own it. For monarchs have been chosen and elected by aristocracies only: a Nation has never elected one.

There is no power without clothes. It is the power that governs the human race. Strip its chiefs to the skin, and no State could be governed; naked officials could exercise no authority; they would look (and be) like everybody else—commonplace, inconsequential. A policeman in plain clothes is one man; in his uniform he is ten. Clothes and title are the most potent thing, the most formidable influence, in the earth. They move the human race to willing and spontaneous respect for the judge, the general, the admiral, the bishop, the ambassador, the frivolous earl, the idiot duke, the sultan, the king, the emperor. No great title is efficient without clothes to support it. In naked tribes of savages the kings wear some kind of rag or decoration which they make sacred to themselves and allow no one else to wear. The king of the great Fan tribe wears a bit of leopard-skin on his shoulder—it is sacred to royalty; the rest of him is perfectly naked. Without his bit of leopard-skin to awe and impress the people, he would not be able to keep his job.

(After a silence.) A curious invention, an unaccountable invention—the human race! The swarming Russian millions have for centuries meekly allowed our Family to rob them, insult them, trample them underfoot, while they lived and

suffered and died with no purpose and no function but to make that Family comfortable! These people are horses—just that—horses with clothes and a religion. A horse with the strength of a hundred men will let one man beat him, starve him, drive him; the Russian millions allow a mere handful of soldiers to hold them in slavery—and these very soldiers are their own sons and brothers!

A strange thing, when one considers it: to wit, the world applies to Czar and System the same moral axioms that have vogue and acceptance in civilized countries! Because, in civilized countries, it is wrong to remove oppressors otherwise than by process of law, it is held that the same rule applies in Russia, where there is no such thing as law—except for our Family. Laws are merely restraints—they have no other function. In civilized countries they restrain all persons, and restrain them all alike, which is fair and righteous; but in Russia such laws as exist make an exception—our Family. We do as we please; we have done as we pleased for centuries. Our common trade has been crime, our common pastime murder, our common beverage blood—the blood of the nation. Upon our heads lie millions of murders. Yet the pious moralist says it is a crime to assassinate us. We and our uncles are a family of cobras set over a hundred and forty million rabbits, whom we torture and murder and feed upon all our days; yet the moralist urges that to kill us is a crime, not a duty.

It is not for me to say it aloud, but to one on the inside—like me—this is naïvely funny; on its face, illogical. Our Family is above all law; there is no law that can reach us, restrain us, protect the people from us. Therefore, we are outlaws. Outlaws are proper mark for anyone's bullet. Ah! what could our Family do without the moralist? He has always been our stay, our support, our friend; today he is our *only* friend. Whenever there has been dark talk of assassination, he has come forward and saved us with his impressive maxim, "Forbear: nothing politically valuable was ever yet achieved by violence." He probably believes it. It is because he has by him no child's book of world-history to teach him that his maxim lacks the backing of statistics. All thrones have been established by violence; no regal tyranny has ever been overthrown except by violence; by violence my fathers set up our throne; by murder, treachery, purjury, torture, banishment and prison they have held it for

four centuries, and by these same arts I hold it today. There is no Romanoff of learning and experience but would reverse the maxim and say: "Nothing politically valuable was ever yet achieved *except* by violence." The moralist realizes that today, for the first time in our history, my throne is in real peril and the nation waking up from its immemorial slavelethargy; but he does not perceive that four deeds of violence are the reason for it: the assassination of the Finland Constitution by my hand; the slaughter, by revolutionary assassins, of Bobrikoff and Plehve; and my massacre of the unoffending innocents the other day. But the blood that flows in my veins—blood informed, trained, educated by its grim heredities, blood alert by its traditions, blood which has been to school four hundred years in the veins of professional assassins, my predecessors—*it* perceives, *it* understands! Those four deeds have set up a commotion in the inert and muddy deeps of the national heart such as no moral suasion could have accomplished; they have aroused hatred and hope in that long-atrophied heart; and, little by little, slowly but surely, that feeling will steal into every breast and possess it. In time, into even the *soldier's* breast—fatal day, day of doom, that! . . . By and by, there will be results! How little the academical moralist knows of the tremendous moral force of massacre and assassination! . . . Indeed there are going to be results! The nation is in labor; and by and by there will be a mighty birth—PATRIOTISM! To put it in rude, plain, unpalatable words—*true* patriotism, real patriotism: loyalty, not to a Family and a fiction, but loyalty to the Nation itself!

. . . There are twenty-five million families in Russia. There is a man-child at every mother's knee. If these were twenty-five million patriotic mothers, they would teach these man-children daily, saying: "Remember this, take it to heart, live by it, die for it if necessary: that our patriotism is mediæval, outworn, obsolete; that the modern patriotism, the true patriotism, the only rational patriotism, is *loyalty to the Nation all the time; loyalty to the Government when it deserves it.*" With twenty-five million taught and trained patriots in the land a generation from now, my successor would think twice before he would butcher a thousand helpless poor petitioners humbly begging for his kindness and justice, as I did the other day.

(*Reflective Pause.*) Well, perhaps I have been affected

by these depressing newspaper-clippings which I found under my pillow. I will read and ponder them again.

(Reads)

POLISH WOMEN KNOTED

CZAR AS LORD'S ANOINTED

RESERVISTS' WIVES TREATED WITH
AWFUL BRUTALITY—AT LEAST
ONE KILLED.

PEOPLE SPENT NIGHT IN PRAYER AND
FASTING BEFORE HIS VISIT
TO NOVGOROD.

Special Cable to *The New York Times*.

London Times—*New York Times*.

Special Cablegram.

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BERLIN, Nov. 27.—Infuriated by the unwillingness of the Polish troops to leave their wives and children, the Russian authorities at Kutno, a town on the Polish frontier, treated the people in a manner almost incredibly cruel.

It is known that *one woman has been knotted to death* and that a number of others have been injured. Fifty persons have been thrown into jail. Some of the prisoners were *tortured into unconsciousness*.

Details of the brutalities are lacking, but it seems that the Cossacks tore the reservists from the arms of their wives and children and then *knotted the women who followed their husbands into the streets*.

In cases where reservists could not be found *their wives were dragged by their hair into the streets and there beaten*. The chief official of the district and the Colonel of a regiment are said to have looked on while *this was being done*.

A girl who had assisted in distributing Socialist tracts was *treated in an atrocious manner*.

LONDON, July 27.—The *London Times* Russian correspondents say the following extract from the *Petersburger Zeitung*, describing the Czar's recent doings at Novgorod, affords a typical instance of the servile adulation which the subjects of the Czar deem it necessary to adopt:

"The blessing of the troops, *who knelt devoutly before his Majesty*, was a profoundly moving spectacle. His Majesty held the sacred ikon aloft in his own name and that of the Empress.

"Thousands *wept with emotion and spiritual ecstasy*. Pupils of the girls' school scattered roses in the path of the monarch.

"People pressed up to the carriage in order to carry away an indelible memory of the hallowed features of the Lord's Anointed. Many old people had spent the night in prayer and fasting *in order to be worthy to gaze at his countenance with pure, undefiled souls*.

"The greatest enthusiasm prevails *at the happiness thus vouchsafed to the people*."

(Moved.) How shameful! . . . how pitiful! . . . And how grotesque! . . . To think—it was *I* that did those cruel things . . . There is no escaping the personal responsibility—it was *I* that did them. And it was *I* that got that groveling and awe-smitten worship! *I*—this thing in the mirror—this carrot! With one hand *I* flogged unoffending women to

death and tortured prisoners to unconsciousness; and with the other I held up the fetish toward my fellow deity in heaven and called down His blessing upon my adoring animals whom, and whose forbears, with His holy approval, I and mine have been instructing in the pains of hell for four lagging centuries. It is a picture! To think that this thing in the mirror—this vegetable—is an accepted deity to a mighty nation, an innumerable host, and nobody laughs; at the same time is a diligent and practical professional devil, and nobody marvels, nobody murmurs about incongruities and inconsistencies! Is the human race a joke? Was it devised and patched together in a dull time when there was nothing more important to do? Has it no respect for itself? . . . I think my respect for it is drooping, sinking—and my respect for myself along with it . . . There is but one restorative—*Clothes!* respect-reviving, spirit-uplifting clothes! heaven's kindest gift to man, his only protection against finding himself out: they deceive him, they confer dignity upon him; without them he has none. How charitable are clothes, how beneficent, how puissant, how inestimably precious! Mine are able to expand a human cipher into a globe-shadowing portent; they can command the respect of the whole world—including my own, which is fading. I will put them on.

MARK TWAIN.